

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DAKAR

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AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 2055

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SG, EG

SUBJ: BIO DATA ON EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO SENEGAL-

SAAD MORTADA

REF: ABU DHABI 1497 (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING BIO SKETCH PROVIDED IN RESPONSE REFTTEL BY MISSION OFFICER GRIFFIN WHO WILL ACQUAINTED WITH AMBASSADOR MORTADA AND WIFE IN ABU DHABI. SOME OF INFORMATION BELOW SUBMITTED PREVIOUSLY BY AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IN AIRGRAM FORM TO ADDRESSEES.

2. SAAD NIRTADA SERVED AS FURST EGTOTUAN AMBASSADOR TO UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) FROM SUMMER 1972 UNTIL NOVEMBER 1973. PRIOR TO BEING POSTED AS CHIEF OF MISSION IN ABU DHABI, HE WAS ASSIGNED FOR SEVERAL YEARS TO CAIRO, WHERE HE SERVED BOTH IN MFA AND ALSO AS PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO MINISTER OF INFORMATION. MORTADA MENTIONED THAT VIRTUALLY ALL OF HIS CAREER WAS SPENT AT POSTS IN EAST AND WEST EUROPE (BUCHAREST AND PARIS AMONG THEM). POSTING IN UAE NOT ONLY WAS FIRST ASSIGNMENT TO AN ARAB COUNTRY, BUT ALSO FIRST TIME IN OVER 20-YEAR CAREER THAT HE WAS CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH ARAB AFFAIRS.

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3. MORTADA IS EXTREMELY ARTICULATE, COSMOPOLITAN AND

BALANCED DIPLOMAT, WHO IS FAR MORE COMFORTABLE ANALYZING BROADER PROSPECTIVE POLITICAL PROBLEMS THAN COMING TO GRIPS WITH FRUSTRATING, BYZANTINE WAY OF LIFE THAT ONE ENCOUNTERS IN TRADITIONAL ARAB SHAIKHDOM. IN PERFORMANCE OF HIS DAY TO DAY DIPLOMATIC DUTIES, MORTADA MIGHT BE DESCRIBED AS REFLECTIVE ANALYST AS OPPOSED TO AN ACTIVIST ON DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT. WHILE MORTADA'S INTELLECTUALISM AND OVERALL COMPETENCE WERE NOTEWORTHY QUALITIES, CONSENSUS OF AMERICAN OFFICERS WHO KNEW HIM IN ABU AHABI WAS THAT HIS LACK OF AGGRESSIVENESS, AND BASICALLY WESTERN ORIENTATION, PROBABLY RELEGATED HIM TO SECOND ECHELON OF EGYPTIAN AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTEES.

4. ON ALL MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUES, INCLUDING ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION, MORTADA'S JUDGEMENTS WERE CONSISTENTLY MODERATE AND SOUND. ONLY DISCERNIBLE SUBSTANTIVE WEAKNESS WAS TENDENCY--PERHAPS NATURAL SURVIVAL TACTIC FOR SENIOR EGYPTIAN DIPLOMAT WHOSE CAREER SPANNED MONARCHY TO SADAT-TO REPLY TOO HEAVILY ON COMMENTARY OF EGYPTIAN PRESS, ESPECIALLY HEKYAL'S EDITORIAL, AS GUIDE TO INTERPRETATION OF ME POLITICAL EVENTS. LIKE MANY EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS, MORTADA EVINCED LUKEWARM ATTITUDE TOWARD SADAT WHEN LATTER FIRST ASSUMED OFFICE. HOWEVER, HE BECAME ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTER OF SADAT FOLLOWING WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE PRESIDENT'S COURAGEOUS DECISIONS, FIRST TO WAGE WAR AND THEN TO NEGOTIATE DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. WHILE MORTADA BELIEVES THAT SINE QUA NON OF ANY ME SETTLEMENT IS EVENTUAL RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT, HE NONETHELESS BELIEVES EGYPT MUST APPROACH ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL FROM POSITION OF STRENGTH AND WARINESS. UNCONVINCED OF ISRAELI DEDICATION TO PEACE, HE FELT ANY CONCESSIONS COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH HARD BARGAINING.

5. MORTADA IS SOCIABLE AND CHARMING OFFICER. WHO ENTHUSIASTICALLY PURSUED CONTACTS WITH WESTERN, ESPECIALLY AMERICAN DIPLOMATS, AND ENCOURAGED HIS SUB-ORDINATES TO DO LIKEWISE. MORTADA WAS NONETHELESS CAREFUL TO INSIST IN PERIOD BEFORE US-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS FULLY RESTORED THAT ANY MEETINGS BE ON CONFIDENTIAL

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MOST DISCREET PROFESSIONAL BASIS-GENERALLY SMALL UNOFFICIAL GATHERINGS RESTRICTED TO NON-ARAB COLLEAGUES. WITHIN EMBRYONIC UAE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY MORTADA ENJOYED REPUTATION AS MOST ADMIRED AND RESPECTED ARAB CHIEF OF MISSION.

6. MORTADA SEEMED GENUINELY SURPRISED TO HAVE BEEN REASSIGNED TO SENEGAL SO SOON AFTER ARRIVAL IN UAE,

ALTHOUGH MOVE PROBABLY WAS NOT UNWELCOME GIVEN FAMILY'S
LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR CLIMATIC AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN
UAE AND THEIR FONDNESS FOR FRENCH ATMOSPHERE.
BOTH MORTADA AND WIFE REFLECT UPPER MIDDLE CLASS,
PRE-REVOLUTIONARY EGYPTIAN UPBRINGING. THEY MAINTAIN
EITHER SMALL HOUSE OR APARTMENT IN CAIRO. IN HIS EARLY
50'S, MORTADA IS GIFTED LINGUIST SPEAKING ENGLISH AND
FRENCH FLUENTLY, HIS HIGHER EDUCATION IS BELIEVED TO
HAVE BEEN DIVIDED BETWEEN EGYPT AND FRANCE. MRS. MORTADA
IS CHARMING AND ATTRACTIVE WOMAN IN MIDDLE
FORTIES, WHO ALSO HAS EXCELLENT COMMAND OF ENGLISH AND
FRENCH. BECAUSE SHE TIRES EASILY, MRS. MORTADA TENDS
TO LIMIT HER SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS TO ONLY MORE
IMPORTANT EVENTS. COUPLE HAVE ONE SON ABOUT 25, WHO
GRADUATED AS DENTIST FROM UNIV. OF CAIRO. IN 1973 HE
WAS KNOWN TO BE WORKING IN NILE DELTA VILLAGE SATISFYING
POST-ACADEMIC GOVERNMENT SERVICE REQUIREMENT.
MORTADA MENTIONED IN LATE 1973 THAT HIS SON WISHES
ULTIMATELY TO PURSUE HIS GRADUATE DENTAL TRAINING IN U.S.
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